

**WETHERSFIELD PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION  
PUBLIC HEARING AND MEETING**

**April 2, 2013**

The Wethersfield Planning and Zoning Commission held a public hearing and meeting on Tuesday, April 2, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. in the Wethersfield Town Council Chambers located at Town Hall, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield, Connecticut 06109.

**1. CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman Harley called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

**1.1 ROLL CALL & SEATING OF ALTERNATES (5 members required for a quorum):**

Clerk Margiotta called the roll as follows:

Member Name	Present	Absent	Excused
Thomas Harley, Chairman	✓		
Richard Roberts, Vice Chairman	✓		
Antonio Margiotta, Clerk			✓
Joseph Hammer	✓		
George Oickle	✓		
Anthony Homicki	✓		
James Hughes			✓
Dave Edwards	✓		
Angelo Robert Fazzina			✓
Thomas Dean (alternate) *arrival 7:10	✓		
Alex Vasel (alternate)	✓		
Leigh Standish (alternate)	✓		

Also present: Jeff Bridges, Town Manager  
Peter Gillespie, Town Planner/Economic Development Manager;  
Denise Bradley, Assistant Planner

Chairman Harley noted at the time of roll call\* there were six (6) full members and three (3) alternate members in attendance. All members present to participate.

Members of the Public were present.

**2. OLD BUSINESS:**

There was no Old Business discussed at this meeting.

**3. NEW BUSINESS:**

**3.1 PUBLIC HEARING APPLICATION NO. 1789-13-Z: Wethersfield Planning & Zoning Commission** seeking adoption of the proposed 2013 Plan of Conservation and Development in accordance with C.G.S. 8-23.

Glenn Chalder, AICP, Planimetrics, made a presentation and led a discussion thereafter with the Commissioners, Mr. Gillespie, Ms. Bradley, and Members of the Public regarding the community's review of the Draft Updating the 2000 Plan of Conservation and Development. Mr. Chalder noted the Wethersfield 2013 Plan of Conservation & Development is a strategic plan for the physical development

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of the community and that it is an advisory document prepared by the Planning & Zoning Commission intended to guide local actions and to provide a framework for consistent decision making in the next decade or so.

Themes discussed in the proposed Plan concerned maintaining community character and quality of life, guiding development, and addressing other issues such as protecting natural resources, preserving open space, managing the roadway system, supporting farms and farming, promoting sustainability and resiliency, maintaining and enhancing utility infrastructure, and managing Wethersfield Cove. Implementation schedules are included in the proposed Plan that would indicate a task a priority code for a given subject, a date of when the task was added, a target date for task completion, Town agency leader of the task, and Town agency partners in the task. He thanked Phil Lohman for his photographic artwork for the Plan.

The deadline for the public to submit comments to Mr. Gillespie or Ms. Bradley of the Planning Department regarding the Plan is Tuesday, April 16, 2013.

Chairman Harley noted for the record correspondence regarding the POCD from 1) CROG (who indicated the proposed POCD presents no conflicts; 2) a letter from Kathy Bagley, Wethersfield Parks and Recreation; 3) a letter from Joe Hickey; two (2) items of correspondence from residents of the Wells Quarter Village neighborhood, and a letter from Wells Quarter Village Association regarding the issue of sidewalks in that neighborhood.

Commissioner Homicki asked Mr. Chalder to comment on the Berlin Turnpike, as there is underutilized land in that area that could invite growth to the Grand List and create opportunities to centralize traffic patterns (i.e. open curb cuts, open land base between properties).

Chairman Harley mentioned promoting access management and shared use between property owners as tools to accomplish opportunities as stated above by Commissioner Homicki.

Mr. Chalder indicated the Berlin Turnpike and Silas Deane Highway are great opportunities for redevelopment and economic growth. He mentioned both sections of the Plan point out that we should continue to implement the recommendations of the Berlin Turnpike (Route 5/15) Study and the Silas Deane Highway Study. He also mentioned the Town has a consolidated parcel recommendation allowing for property owners to cooperate. He concluded that a side bar note regarding the subject described herein may be an appropriate reference in the Plan.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Michael Liska, 814 Ridge Road, appeared before the Commission and noted that he has sent Mr. Gillespie some correspondence relative to the rail line as complimentary to the Plan. He spoke of the center node referred to in the Plan with its pedestrian-friendly components and learned from a recent newspaper excerpt of the concept of a certain portion of the Silas Deane Highway being reduced to two (2) lanes with a landscaped center median. He believes the median is not pedestrian friendly, as it blocks views from opposite sides of the street. He noted the alternative of having the proposed bike lane location between the sidewalk and the proposed parking lanes rather than in the travel portion (and in line) of street traffic. He noted that the overall plan is very encouraging.

Ruth Clancy, appeared before the Commission and noted she would like to see the bike trails very visibly marked and would like businesses to provide more parking for bicycles as to promote increased bicycle use. She would like alternatives proposed for crossing the Silas Deane Highway in addition to the current crosswalk system.

Diane Doot, Director, Central CT Health District, and a member of the Achieve Committee (a committee funded by a grant to promote physical activity for disease and obesity reduction). She is glad to see emphasis in the Plan regarding a walkable community. She emphasized that bike and walking paths need to lead somewhere and encouraged avoidance of creating paths that lead to nowhere. She described an upcoming promotion of bike use in the community called Connecticut Trails Day (June 1, 2013). She indicated that having an increased population density encourages walking and bike use. She mentioned it might be a good idea to have the Town as responsible for sidewalk maintenance

repairs other than individual property owners. She suggested the connection of the tourist node in Old Wethersfield to the proposed node on the Silas Deane Highway. She noted it is the responsibility of Town to make the proposed Putnam Bridge pedestrian/bike path accessible from Wethersfield. She mentioned CCHD inclusion on the Plan Implementation chart as a partner where deemed appropriate.

Commissioner Oickle inquired and Mrs. Doot indicated it may make sense in having a portion of the mill rate apply to sidewalk maintenance repair and installation. She believes enhancements can be added for better biking on existing roads. Town Staff is working on access to the proposed Putnam Bridge pedestrian/bike path.

Jim Woodworth, 5 River Road, commented that accuracy should be delineated in the bike routes depicted in the plan. He mentioned areas along the Heritage Trail heading uphill and to Prospect Street have gaps in bicycle lane delineation. He spoke of lane reduction in West Hartford and how it could be accomplished in Wethersfield (i.e. on street parking perpendicular to the street) as methods for traffic calming. He would like to see the Heritage Trail promoted as an area of serenity.

Tracy Eck, 53 Boulter Road, noted the proposed node depicted as the new Town Center on Silas Deane Highway having one lane of traffic each way is not practical for handling daily commuting traffic flow and the perils (weather, increased bus traffic, etc.) surrounding it. She also mentioned there is a lack of merchants needed to support the proposed pedestrian friendly area.

Will Eck, 53 Boulter Road, mentioned he is agreeable to the concept and would like to see amenities and more merchants to draw people into Town. He mentioned the band shell in Rocky Hill as an example.

Mike Liska, 814 Ridge Road, mentioned the Town node Center and traffic flow consequences would warrant a comprehensive review. He spoke of a Smart Growth principle of looking at streets one, two and three blocks away from a main node (i.e. Silas Deane Highway) and create strategic interconnections of roadways to help improve bicycle, vehicle and pedestrian circulation/access. He believes it is a good time for planning. The Town promoting farms/farming activities should be encouraged.

Rick Dorran, 223 Main Street, asked for the top five (5) priority strategies in the Plan to be identified.

Mr. Chalder and Chairman Harley mentioned there is a tasks and strategies schedule at the end of the Plan document that identifies strategies and those responsible for implementation.

Jim Woodworth, 5 River Road, commented that CL&P and railroad company right of way use for bike routes/bike ways are good ideas. He would like to see language in the Plan for purposes of prequalification for the community farm preservation program and to encourage Town Council to re-authorize the \$1.2 million for open space acquisition.

Commissioner Oickle inquired and Mr. Chalder indicated his experience has led him to believe that an entity such as a Plan Implementation Committee who meets at least quarterly will identify what in the Plan can be currently implemented for action and are communities who have a much more measured approach in the Plan. This process would give communities the given needs they have expressed. The process would involve prioritizing and moving towards the tasks over time, as it is more cost effective and efficient for the Town.

Mr. Chalder suggested this Application be tabled so that he may incorporate comments made this evening, as well as correspondence received, into a table for the Commission that would suggest how the information could be incorporated the Plan document.

Mike Liska, 814 Ridge Road, asked why the railway is not mentioned in the Plan. He mentioned he has sent information to Mr. Gillespie regarding the potential of having the privately-held rail line accommodate a low-floor design, modern trolley that would make a connection to the redevelopment occurring at Front Street in Hartford, CT. He provided a picture of a proposed trolley and noted there are several companies competing for their design to be implemented in several areas of the United States. He believes the Plan should reflect the opportunity of incorporating this form of transportation.

Vice Chairman Roberts indicated the contemplation of a new town center as a response to constructively

address the desire for a new town center and working with the Silas Deane Highway as it exists (and knowing the State governs the determination on its configuration) and to creatively make a statement on a discrete section that could be something different to welcome pedestrian and business use (promote modern smart growth activities).

Chairman Harley mentioned the transportation issues need to be ironed out first and prior to developing business, etc.

Commissioner Dean commented on the plan as advisory and inspirational. The Plan does encourage a smart growth principle of looking away from the tyranny of the automobile.

Commissioner Edwards commented on past perceptions of nodes proposed on the Silas Deane Highway. He encouraged a review of the objectives and information learned by the Silas Deane Highway Beautification Committee Plans in the 1970s and perhaps not spelled out in the proposed POCD.

Commissioner Oickle inquired and Mr. Chalder indicated concepts pertaining to redevelopment mechanisms (redevelopment agency, pursue funds, etc.) are mentioned in the Plan and the issue of whether to go to referendum would be determined on a case by case basis. Mr. Chalder suggested it should be left on the table and explore the opportunity for yard setback issues to be determined on a case by case basis (i.e. consider changes in zoning regulations to accomplish such issues).

**Motion:** Vice Chairman Roberts made a motion to continue the Public Hearing of **PUBLIC HEARING APPLICATION NO. 1789-13-Z: Wethersfield Planning & Zoning Commission** seeking adoption of the proposed 2013 Plan of Conservation and Development in accordance with C.G.S. 8-23.

**Second:** Commissioner Hammer seconded the motion.

Aye: Harley, Roberts, Hammer, Oickle, Homicki, Edwards, Dean, Vasel;

Nay: None;

Vote: 8 – 0;

**Hearing Continued.**

#### **4. OTHER BUSINESS:**

Mr. Gillespie indicated very well attended Community Meeting was held at the Keeney Memorial Cultural Center on Thursday, February 28, 2013, to discuss a planning study and its subject sites (Masonic building and Comstock Ferre property) on Main Street and to seek ideas for renovating these underused buildings. The study is funded by a grant the Town received from the CT Trust for Historic Preservation. Mr. Gillespie noted estimates and conceptual plans will be explored after meeting with the subject sites property owners.

Chairman Harley inquired and Mr. Gillespie indicated the Town is awaiting a decision this month from the State regarding an itemized grant application made for purposes of implementing the Old Wethersfield Master Plan.

#### **5. MINUTES – March 19, 2013 Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting Minutes:**

**Minutes of the March 19, 2013 Meeting of the Planning & Zoning Commission will be reviewed at the next meeting.**

**6. STAFF REPORTS:**

There were no reports made by Staff during this meeting.

**7. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON GENERAL MATTERS OF PLANNING AND ZONING.**

There were no public comments made at this meeting regarding general matters of planning and zoning.

**8. CORRESPONDENCE:**

Mr. Gillespie mentioned:

**9. PENDING APPLICATIONS TO BE HEARD AT FUTURE MEETINGS:**

There were no pending applications discussed during this meeting.

**10. ADJOURNMENT:**

**Motion:** Commissioner Homicki motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 p.m.

**Second:** Commissioner Edwards seconded the motion.

Aye: Harley, Roberts, Hammer, Oickle, Homicki, Edwards, Dean, Vasel, Standish;

Nay: None;

Vote: 9 – 0;

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ellen Goslicki, Recording Secretary